Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAN JO 03389 091845Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /081 W
----------016270 101131Z /10
R 091514Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1901

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 3389

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CS
SUBJ: LABOR DEVELOPMENTS IN COSTA RICA

REF: SAN JOSE A-32, JULY 19, 1978

SUMMARY AND COMMENT. THE LABOR SITUATION IN COSTA RICA IS WARMING UP, BUT NOT YET TO A BOILING POINT. AN ILLEGAL STRIKE AGAINST A PRIVATE PLANTATION HAS LED TO A CURRENT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE GOCR AND A COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED BANANA WORKERS UNION AND, BY EXTENSION, WITH THE INCREASINGLY POWERFUL COMMUNIST LABOR MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE. THE EMERGING GOVERNMENT POLICY APPEARS TO BE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF LAW AND ORDER, THAT IS, THE STRICTER ENFORCEMENT OF ANTI-STRIKE LAWS IN AN ATTEMPT TO WEAKEN LEFTIST DOMINATION OF KEY SECTORS OF THE COUNTRY'S LABOR MOVEMENT. FOR THEIR PART, THE DEMOCRATIC LABOR UNIONS ARE SHOWING SOME INCIPIENT SIGNS OF REINVIGORATION -- WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THEIR FRIENDS. HOW HOT THE POT WILL BECOME IS ANY OBSERVER'S GUESS, BUT AT LEAST THE DEMARCATION LINES ARE BEING DRAWN MORE CLEARLY THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE RECENT PAST. SEVERAL FACTORS, HOWEVER, PROBABLY LIMIT ANY REAL CHANGE IN THE LABOR STATUS QUO HERE: THE UNWILLINGNESS (AND POLITICAL INABILITY) OF THE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT TO EXERT THE KIND OF INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE THAT MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS REPRESSIVE; THE CONTINUING ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH OF THE COMMUNIST UNIONS; THE ENDEMIC WEAKNESS OF THE DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERATION;
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAN JO 03389 091845Z

AND THE PATERNALISTIC INERTIA OF THE MAJORITY OF COSTA RICAN EMPLOYERS. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

1. THE LA TERESA AFFAIR. IN MID-JULY A COMMUNIST BANANA-WORKERS UNION (STAPPG, SINDICATO DE TRABAJADORES AGRICOLAS Y DE PLANTACIONES DE POCOCI Y GUACIMO) ATTEMPTED TO HALD PRODUCTION AT AND ORGANIZE THE NON-UNION WORKERS OF 'LA TERESA', A PRIVATE PLANT-

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

ATION IN THE ATLANTIC ZONE. THIS EFFORT MET WITH UNEXPECTED RESISTANCE FROM THE WORKERS, THE OWNER (FORMERLY AN AMERICAN, NOW A COSTA RICAN CITIZEN) AND FROM THE GOCR, WHICH DISPATCHED THE CIVIL GUARD TO KEEP THE PEACE. WITHIN DAYS, LABOR MINISTER ESTELA QUESADA ANNOUNCED THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO INITIATE THE LEGAL DISSOLUTION OF STAPPG FOR UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES.

2. A GOVERNMENT POLICY. SUCCEEDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT, THE INTERIOR MINISTER AND OTHERS MADE CLEAR THAT MRS. QUESADA'S ACTION WAS PART OF AN EMERGING GOCR POLICY OF INCREASED FIRMNESS VIS-A-VIS THE COMMUNISTS IN GENERAL AND THE COMMUNIST LABOR MOVEMENT IN PARTICULAR. ON 28 JULY, PRESIDENT RODRIGO CARAZO REPLIED OPENLY TO A LETTER SENT TO HIM THE WEEK BEFORE BY RODRIGO PANIAGUA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COMMUNIST NATIONAL PLANTATION WORKERS CONFEDERATION. PANIAGUA HAD PROTESTED THE PLANNED DISSOLUTION OF STAPPG AND WARNED OF "GRAVE DANGER" IF THAT WERE TO OCCUR; HE OPENLY THREATENED A RESPONSE USING "ALL THE FORCE REPRESENTED BY THE BANANA WORKERS OF COSTA RICA". CARAZO FIRMLY REJECTED PANIAGUA'S LETTER, DECLARING THAT "THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC WILL NOT TOLERATE THREATS" AND THAT "COSTA RICA WILL CONTINUE TO BE AN OASIS OF PEACE AND DIGNITY DESPITE CONSTANT THREATS, BY WORD AND BY ACTION, FROM THE COMMUNISTS AND OTHER SIMILAR GROUPS". TO MAKE CERTAIN THE POINT WAS MADE, THE GOCR LATER INSERTED IN THE MAJOR DAILY NEWSPAPERS FULL PAGE ADS WHICH CONTAINED BOTH PANIAGUA'S MISSIVE AND THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

3. THE NIGHT BEFORE (THE 27TH) INTERIOR MINISTER JUAN ECHEVERRIA, SPOKE ON THE RADIO AND TELEVISION ON THE THEME OF RESPECT FOR THE LAW. HE CAME AS CLOSE AS HAS ANY GOCR OFFICIAL TO DATE TO DELINEATING THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT: ONE OF LAW AND ORDER, OR AT LEAST, MORE LAW AND MORE ORDER THAN UNDER THE PREVIOUS EIGHT YEARS OF LIBERATION PARTY LEADERSHIP. ECHEVERRIA COMMENTED ON THE NICARAGUAN BORDER PROBLEM (SEE SAN JOSE 3214), POLITICAL ASYLUM AND HUMAN RIGHTS, CORRUPTION, DISRESPECT FOR TRAFFIC AND OTHER LAWS, AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY THAN ON OTHER ISSUES, ON THE LA TERESA AFFAIR: "I WAS ANGRY THAT I HAD TO SEND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FORCES TO LA TERESA IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE WORKERS THE RIGHT TO WORK .... IF IT PROVES NECESSARY TO PLACE A CIVIL GUARD MEMBER ALONGSIDE EACH WORKER TO ALLOW HIM TO WORK, WE WILL DO IT, WHATEVER THE COST MAY BE. WE WILL NOT PERMIT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIME OF TERROR IN COSTA RICA ...." OTHER GOCR OFFICIALS ALSO HAVE EMPHASIZED PRIVATELY TO US THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-COMMUNIST AND PRO-LAW INTENTIONS. (NOTE: COPY OF ECHEVERRIA'S SPEECH BEING POUCHED TO ARA/CEN/CR).

4. THE DEMOCRATIC UNIONS RESPOND. AT THE SAME TIME, THE HERETOFORE MOSTLY SUPINE CCTD (COSTA RICAN CONFEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC WORKERS) HAS SHOWN SOME, PERHAPS MARGINAL, SIGNS OF REVIVAL. ON 4

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

AUGUST, ITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED THE WITHDRAWL OF THE CCTD FROM CUS, THE COMMITTEE OF UNION UNITY, WHICH WAS ALL TO OBVIOUSLY DOMINATED BY COMMUNIST FORCES. WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF LABOR MINISTER QUESADA, AND WITH OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE, THE CCTD IS ALSO ATTEMPTING TO DEAL WITH THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEM WHICH HAS BEEN MORE RESPONSIBLE THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR FOR DEMOCRATIC LABOR'S WEAK-NESS RELATIVE TO THE COMMUNISTS: THE LACK OF SUFFICIENT, FULL-TIME, LABOR ORGANIZERS. WE ARE INFORMED BY DOHERTY THAT THE AFL-CIO, CHANNELING ITS FUNDS THROUGH ORIT (INTER-AMERICAN REGIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION), WILL HENCEFORTH SUPPORT SIX FULL-TIME LABOR ACTIV-ISTS AT A SALARY OF SOME $400 PER MONTH (UP FROM $250, PAY SO LOW THAT THE CCTD HAD BEEN ABLE TO HIRE ONLY TWO OF THE FOUR PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED). SIMILARLY, AIFLD, THROUGH ORIT, WILL COVER THE SALARY OF THE CCTD SECRETARY GENERAL SO THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO DEVOTE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FULL TIME TO UNION ACTIVITIES. THE LATTER SUBSIDY WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FOLLOWING THE ELECTION OF A SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE CCTD MEETING IN EARLY SEPTEMBER; IT IS LIKELY THAT LUIS ARMANDO GUT-IERREZ WILL BE RE-ELECTED. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE LABOR MINISTER HAS INDICATED THAT A WAY WOULD BE FOUND TO GIVE GUTIERREZ LEAVE WITHOUT PAY FROM HIS JOB AT THE CENTRAL BANK. THERE IS THUS SOME HOPE THAT THE COSTA RICAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR MOVEMENT CAN TAKE POSITIVE ADVANTAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INCREASING ANTAGONISM TOWARD THE COMMUNIST UNIONS.
WEISSMAN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR RELATIONS, UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANJO03389
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780327-0674
Format: TEL
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780882/aaaacqqs.tel
Line Count: 146
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 31e2ea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 SAN JOSE A-32
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1791431
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LABOR DEVELOPMENTS IN COSTA RICA
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/31e2ea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014